



The life of
Sir David Attenborough



Aim

- To learn about the life of Sir David Attenborough.

Success Criteria

- I can recall several facts about Sir David's life in chronological order.
- I can answer questions about David using a range of reading skills.

Who is Sir David Attenborough?

Sir David Attenborough is an English broadcaster and naturalist and is extremely well known for his documentaries for the BBC.

He is often referred to as a 'national treasure' in Britain and was knighted in 1985, earning him the title of Sir David Attenborough.

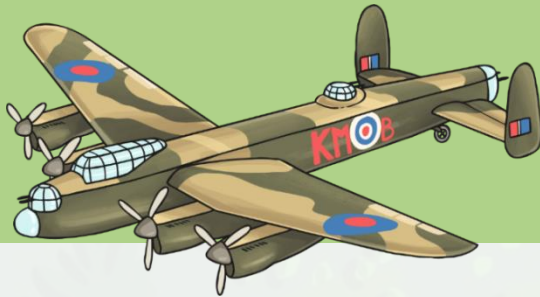
He has won many awards for his wildlife film-making and even has 15 species named after him.



Growing Up

Sir David Attenborough was born David Frederick Attenborough, on May 8th 1926, in London. His older brother is the actor (pictured on right), Lord Richard Attenborough, who has been in some well known films, such as 'The Great Escape' and 'Jurassic Park'.

David also had a younger brother and two sisters who were fostered by his parents during World War Two.



Studying and Service

From an early age, David had an interest in natural history. As a young boy, he had a large collection of fossils and stones.

1945 - He obtained a degree in Natural Sciences from Cambridge University.

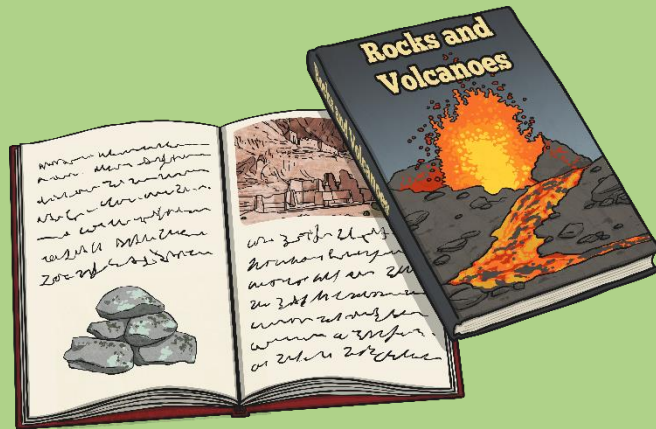
1947 - After leaving university, he had to complete two years of National Service in the Royal Navy.

1950 - He married Jane Oriel and later became a father to two children, Robert (who became a lecturer in bioanthropology) and Susan (who became a headteacher at a primary school).

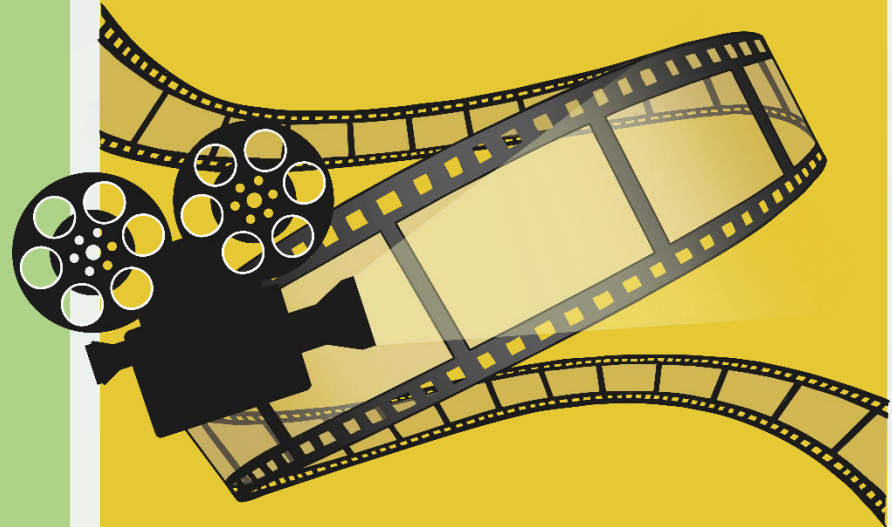


Working Life

1949 - After leaving the Navy, David edited children's science textbooks, where he was in charge of making sure the information was accurate.



1950 - Despite not owning a television (and only ever having seen one television programme himself!), he went on to train as a television producer for the BBC.



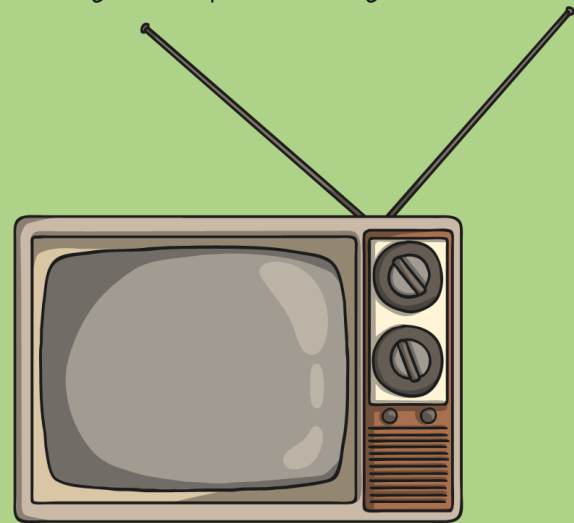
Working Life

1952 - David began to produce natural history programmes before returning to his studies.

1965 - He was offered the job of BBC Two Controller.

1969 - He later became the Director of Television Programming.

1972 - He left this job so he could work full-time writing and producing television programmes about natural history.



Famous Documentaries

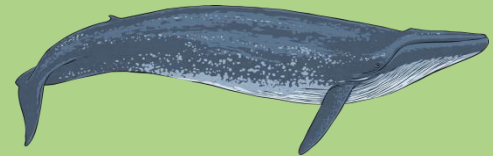
Attenborough has been a huge part in the creation of over 20 documentaries. Some of the most well known are:



Life Series
(started in 1979)



The Life of Birds
(1998)



The Blue Planet
(2001)



Planet Earth (2006)



Frozen Planet (2011)

Supporting Others

Sir David Attenborough supports many charities including:

- **World Land Trust:** An international conservation charity which helps to save the rainforest and other habitats.
- **WWF:** This is the world's largest conservation organisation. Their motto is 'People living in harmony with nature'.
- **Cool Earth:** This charity protects rainforests to help in the fight against climate change.



New Species

In honour of the work that Sir David has done, some newly-discovered species have been named after him. Here are just a few examples:

- A species of the Ecuadorian flowering-tree (*Blakea Attenboroughi*);
- A Madagascan ghost shrimp (*Ctenocheloides Attenboroughi*);
- The millimetre-long Attenborough's Goblin Spider (pictured on right).



Working as an Author



Alongside making many natural history television programmes, Sir David has had many books published.

His 'Zoo Quest' series of books includes accounts of the animals he encountered on his expeditions around the world.

Photos of Sir David

He is 94!



Watch one of his latest programmes

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000b9f8/seven-worlds-one-planet-series-1-3-south-america>



Interesting facts about Sir David Attenborough



Take from:

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/science/nature/david-attenborough-facts/>

Interesting facts

1. Sir David Attenborough was born on 8 May, 1926, in Isleworth, West London

The same year as [Queen Elizabeth II](#)!

2. He was raised on the campus of University College, Leicester

Now the University of Leicester, where his dad was principal.

3. Sir David doesn't count himself as an animal 'lover'

But instead says he has always been fascinated by them.

4. He's thrifty!

At 11 years old he struck a deal selling newts to University College, Leicester for 3d (3 pence) each. The newts only came from a pond 5m away from the university's zoology department!

Interesting facts

5. He is the only person to have won BAFTAs for programmes in black and white, colour, HD, and 3D.

6. He doesn't own a car as he never passed his driving test

He's also not keen on sending emails, and prefers receiving letters by fax or post.

7. During [World War II](#) his parents adopted two Jewish refugee girls from Europe.

8. There's only one animal Sir David doesn't like...

Rats!

9. Sir David was rejected from the first job he ever applied for at the BBC

The position of radio talk producer.

10. In 1947 he spent two years serving in the Royal Navy

Based in North Wales and the Firth of Forth.

Interesting facts

11. When Sir David got his first job in television, he didn't even own a TV
Like most British people at the time!

12. His first programme, called *Coelacanth*, looked at the rediscovery of the coelacanth

- a prehistoric fish.

13. Sir David has more than ten plants and animals named after him

Such as the *Nepenthes attenboroughii* - a giant carnivorous plant that devours animals as large as rats - and the UK's new polar research vessel, RRS Sir David Attenborough.

14. In 1985 he received a knighthood

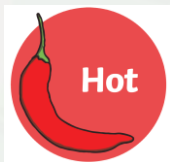
Granting him the title of Sir David Attenborough.

15. He's thought to be one of the most well-travelled people on the planet

For *The Life of Birds* documentary, he travelled a whopping 256,000 miles - that's the same as travelling around the world ten times!

Task

Today, we would like you to complete a reading comprehension all about Sir David. The document is on the school website. Look at the bottom of the page for the stars to see which page is which challenge.



Sir David Attenborough

Sir David Attenborough is one of Britain's most famous and best loved TV presenters. He is a natural historian who has introduced generations of people to a variety of unknown species of animals from around the world. He has a distinctive and widely recognisable narrator's voice which people have come to both imitate and love.

David Frederick Attenborough was born 8th May 1926 in Isleworth, West London (the same year as Queen Elizabeth II). He had two brothers, the eldest of whom became an Academy Award-winning actor and director (Richard Attenborough). David and his brothers were raised on the campus of University College in Leicester where their father was a university principal and was the age of seven, had gathered an impressive collection of bird eggs. Once he had finished school, David was awarded with a scholarship to the natural sciences at the University of Cambridge. After graduating, David was conscripted to serve for two years in the Royal Navy. He spent years on a ship in North Wales and did not get to see the world as he had hoped.

In 1950, Attenborough married Jane Oriel and they had two children to him. Sadly, Jane died in 1997 from a brain haemorrhage.

After the war ended, Attenborough returned to London and started working as an editor for an educational publisher. Shortly after, he began a training programme with the BBC and in 1952, began working as a producer for the television station. This was the beginning of a remarkable career in television.

Interesting Fact
When David Attenborough started working at the BBC, he had only ever seen one television programme. He didn't even own a TV!

Questions

- Find and copy a word which means to copy.

- What career did David's brother, Richard Attenborough, pursue? Tick one.
☐ Historian
☐ Archaeologist
☐ Actor
☐ Scientist
- What sad event occurred in Attenborough's life in 1997?

- When did Attenborough first start working for the BBC? Tick one.
☐ 1947
☐ 1950
☐ 1954
☐ 1952
- What difficulties did Attenborough face when he first started working for the BBC?

- What did Attenborough study at the London School of Economics?

- Explain how we know that Attenborough was well-thought of at the BBC.

Reading tips

Remember to circle words you are unsure of whilst reading and try to work out their meaning. You can do this by:

- a) Reading on and trying to make sense of the word in the sentence
- b) Substituting the word for another word with a similar meaning to see if it makes sense.
- c) Using a dictionary to look up its meaning.

Remember to sound out words you are unsure of. Use your phonic knowledge, look for words within words.



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